

Section 15 Sevier River Basin WATER-RELATED RECREATION

15.1	Introduction	15-1
15.2	Setting	15-1
15.3	Organizations and Regulations	15-2
15.3.1	Local	15-2
15.3.2	State	15-2
15.3.3	Federal	15-2
15.4	Outdoor Recreation Facilities and Use	15-2
15.4.1	City and County Recreational Facilities	15-3
15.4.2	State Parks	15-3
15.4.3	Federal Recreation Areas	15-3
15.5	Recreational Activity Problems and Needs	15-4
15.6	Needed Recreation Opportunities	15-5
15.7	Issues and Recommendations	15-6
15.7.1	Outdoor Ethics	15-6
15.7.2	Comprehensive Planning	15-6
 <u>Tables</u>		
15-1	State Parks Visitation and Facilities-1997	15-4
15-2	Federal Parks, Monuments and Recreation Areas	15-4

Section Fifteen Sevier River Basin - State Water Plan

Water Related Recreation

Water is often the focal point for outdoor recreation whether it is flat-water for boating, streams for fishing, or just enjoying the changing reflections or soul-quieting music of rippling water.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes most of the water-related recreational facilities and resources found in the Sevier River Basin. Some of the data presented is from the Utah State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning (SCORP)¹⁵ process. This process provides information for the preparation of a priority list of key water-related recreational and environmental issues to be addressed in the future. Information includes consumer or participant's expressions of outdoor recreation needs, issues and alternative solutions. The Utah SCORP also provides general guidelines for future leisure investments and suggests actions and responsibilities for attaining outdoor recreation needs. The SCORP is required by the federal government for states to receive grants for acquisition and development of outdoor recreation facilities by federal, state and local government sponsors. Public demand for outdoor recreation facilities and access are considered in the plan.

More than 370 **projects** have been funded in Utah since the Land & Water Conservation Fund program was initiated in the late 1960s; water features have always been a high priority amenity or site feature. The following tabulation is a breakdown of total project cost for 32 Land & Water Conservation Fund matching-grant projects.

Garfield County	3 projects	\$97,700
Juab County	2 projects	\$253,300
Millard County	6 projects	\$642,700
Piute County	4 projects	\$76,000
Sanpete County	9 projects	\$540,700
Sevier County	8 projects	\$510,500

15.2 SETTING

The numerous reservoirs, clear streams, alpine scenery and red rock plateaus are prime recreational attractions. In contrast, there are historic mining remains, broad expanses of desert vistas and constantly moving sand dunes. These resources attract recreationists who enjoy horseback riding, fishing, boating and water skiing, sightseeing, sand dune bugging and ATV touring. As can be seen, there is a broad resources base supporting recreation. It seems the most popular recreation activities are associated with water.

The major public land managers are the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, National Park Service and Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration. These four agencies control about 77 percent of the total area. These public lands also contain many of the water-related recreational settings.

Private ownership of many of the storage reservoirs make up a substantial part of the water-related recreation areas.

In addition, the Division of Parks and Recreation manages six state parks containing 1,656 acres. The Division of Parks and Recreation also has responsibilities for enforcing the boating laws on all waters in the area; e.g., Gunnison Bend Reservoir and Panguitch Lake. The division also provides custodial management of Fort Deseret south of Delta, and provides cooperative OHV management in the Sand Dunes and Oasis areas.

The National Park Service manages **Bryce** Canyon National Park and Cedar Breaks National Monument, two scenic splendors lit up with colors so rich and glowing they awaken even the most apathetic enthusiasm. The Bureau of Land Management administers the Little Sahara Recreation Area, an area of moving, shifting sands. Here sand dune bugging has become a popular pastime.

Other points of interest include the Old River Bed north of Delta where the Sevier Lake Basin drained into ancient Lake Bonneville, **Tintic** mines and

Eureka Mining Museum, Sugarloaf (Pahvant Butte volcano) near Fillmore and Cedar Grove near Koosharem where the peace treaty with the American Indians was signed.

One can go from the colorful vistas of the Markagunt and Paunsaugunt plateaus down their gentle slopes with the ponds and lakes fed by cool mountain streams, through the forests of pine and aspen, past the rugged mountains with their snow-capped peaks and into the broad river valleys with their green expanses of cultivated crops. From here, one can travel through fertile lands and on to the broad, blossoming river delta and then into the simmering desert with its barren mountains and vast expanse, ending in a broad, dry **playa**. Each of these areas has their own unique beauty and provide experiences for even the most discriminating recreationist.

Byways include SR-143 from Brian Head-Cedar Breaks to Panguitch Lake, SR-14 from US-89 at Long Valley Junction to Navajo Lake and on to Cedar City, SR-12 from south of Panguitch to Bryce Canyon and to Torrey via **Escalante** and Boulder, and SR-31 from Fair-view to the Skyline Drive and to Huntington. Several back ways provide access to points of interest around the basin.

15.3 ORGANIZATIONS AND REGULATIONS

Management of recreational facilities and activities is usually by local, state or federal government agencies. Many of these facilities or activities are water-related.

15.3.1 Local

Most of the basin is covered by two multi-county planning districts (**MCDs**). The Central (Six County AOG) Multi-County Planning District (MCD) covers the entire basin except Beaver, Garfield, Iron and Kane counties. These counties are covered by the Southwest MCD. A small part of Tooele County is part of the Wasatch Front Regional Council.

Each of the **MCDs** collects data to prepare brochures and guide material to attract and assist visitors to the area. These organizations are formed and staffed under the direction of the several county commissions. **MCDs** are also called “area associations of government” or **AOGs**--they often

provide technical services, clearing houses for grant programs and other advocacy roles for local government.

Other local organizations are also involved in promoting recreational activities. These include county, city and town governments; and to some degree, state and regional tourism organizations.

15.3.2 State

The Division of Parks and Recreation has responsibility for conserving Utah’s rich natural resources heritage while making recreational opportunities available to all users. By statute, they are the “recreation authority” for the state (see *Title 63-1 I-1 7.1, UCA, as amended*). Their mission is to “enhance the quality of life through parks, people and programs.” Within this context, the division manages six state parks in the Sevier River Basin. They also coordinate four grant funding-programs, manage the OHV program, oversee the boating and trail programs, and prepare the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (**SCORP**)¹⁵. The division operates under the general guidelines of their 1996 system plan: Frontiers 2000: A System Plan to Guide Utah State Parks and Recreation into the 21st Century (pp.39). Fifteen major issues have been identified by planning participants. Among these issues are boating, participating in the state water planning process, planning, public safety on Utah’s waters, establishing boat carrying capacities on lakes and reservoirs, boating education, personal water craft training and certification, general training, and generally enforcing the state boating laws.

15.3.3 Federal

Federal agencies with responsibilities to provide and conserve recreational opportunities include the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and National Park Service. Each operates under the regulations peculiar to that agency. Most federal recreational activities are not water-oriented, but many are located on or near small streams, lakes, and riparian areas.

15.4 OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND USE

All levels of government and the private sector

provide recreational opportunities and facilities. Some of the most used recreational facilities are water-related, either directly or indirectly. There is a very broad spectrum of recreational uses.

15.4.1 City and County Recreational Facilities

City and county recreational facilities range from golf courses and ball diamonds to picnic areas, all using water for large grass areas or minor amounts for culinary needs. Swimming pools and ice skating rinks are direct users of water. Water skiing and boating are popular water-based activities on a few privately-owned reservoirs.

Other recreation pursuits do not require much water for direct use. One of these is the Paiute ATV Trail. ATV activities are sponsored by local committees and travel councils and funded by the State Parks OHV Grants Program--matched by federal dollars. The consortium of state, federal and local groups and businesses promote the virtues of the 200-mile loop Paiute ATV trail that traverses three mountain ranges, through rugged canyons and desert areas. There are numerous side trips to enjoy other activities making a total of more than 300 miles of roads and trails. This trail also has access to the Great Western Trail which will eventually run from Canada to Mexico along the Skyline Drive on the eastern boundary of the basin.

15.4.2 State Parks

The Division of Parks and Recreation manages the following six state parks: Fremont Indian (889 acres) and Territorial Statehouse (2.4 acres) Parks and Museums, Otter Creek (80 acres), Palisade (79 acres), Piute (40 acres), and Yuba (120 acres plus 445 acres leased from BLM) State Parks. These parks cover about 1,656 acres. Surface-water areas are not included as they are generally under other ownership. Otter Creek, Palisade, Piute and Yuba state parks offer fishing, boating and water skiing. Clear Creek is a popular amenity running through Fremont Indian State Park and Museum. All parks have water-related recreational facilities except Territorial Statehouse State Park and Museum. Fremont Indian State Park and Museum have campgrounds, trails and guided interpretive trails. All of the parks are popular with visitation increasing

nearly 25 percent in the last 10 years. Visitation for each of the parks is listed in Table 15-1 along with the water-related facilities available. The 364,000 guests in 1977 generated about \$5.8 million in economic activity and about \$363,600 in sales tax revenue.

The recreational demand at Yuba State Park is several times the capacity of existing facilities, especially on the holiday weekends of Memorial Day and Labor Day. To compound the problem, part of the area around Yuba Lake (Sevier Bridge Reservoir) is in private ownership and no facilities are available. The other major land owner is the Bureau of Land Management. The Division of Parks and Recreation has secured \$300,000 in state funds for improvements. These funds were matched by more than \$300,000 of federal funds to provide access, day use areas, and control fencing. This has been an excellent state, federal and local government partnership. The elevation of the reservoir makes it an early season boating destination for thousands of boaters along the Wasatch Front.

The regulations at Yuba Lake are an example of limits or boating caps that have been instituted on six reservoirs in the state, including Jordanelle, Quail Creek and Deer Creek reservoirs (state parks) during 1996. More than 5,000 more boats were sold in 1996 than in 1995. Most of these are personal watercraft (PWC). These are fast, fun, and sometimes a nuisance to other park users. They are also more affordable to the average middle income family and are easier to store and tow. This increase in PWCs will result in more cautious management of water bodies and a need for education and greater courtesy by PWC users. More than 2,441 students have been trained and certified statewide on PWCs as of December 1996. In addition, 12,980 students have been trained and certified on OHV's.

15.4.3 Federal Recreation Areas

Bryce Canyon National Park, Cedar Breaks National Monument and Little Sahara Sand Dunes Recreation Area are the major developed federal facilities. These federal recreational facilities are shown in Table 15-2. Visitation at these three important recreation areas generate more than 1.42 million visits each year, spending more than \$38 per person or in excess of \$54 million in state and local

Table 15-1 STATE PARKS VISITATION AND FACILITIES-1997				
Park	Visitation (1000)	Water Area (acres)	Overnight (number)	Elevation (feet)
Fremont Indian	100	stream	31	5,900
Otter Creek	21	3,120	30	6,400
Palisade	103	60	53	5,800
Piute	30	3,360	Undev.	5,900
Territorial State House	40	-0-	-0-	5,100
Yuba	70	10,900	27	5,500

economic activity; and at least \$3.4 million in tax revenues (conservative estimate without multipliers).

There are many campgrounds and picnic areas located in the Dixie, Fish Lake, Manti-La Sal and Uinta national forests. Recreational activity is measured in "recreational visitor days (RVD)." Dixie has use at 0.305 acres per RVD; Fish Lake has less intense use at 1.117 acres per RVD. For comparison, the Wasatch National Forest is at an intensity of 0.321 acres per RVDs. Many of these local facilities are near mountain lakes, reservoirs and streams. Other facilities include cabin accommodations near Navajo Lake and Panguitch Lake.

15.5 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY PROBLEMS AND NEEDS

The Division of State Parks and Recreation is in the process of conducting a series of public opinion surveys associated with state parks and the Utah SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan). The 1992 survey helped determine the recreational problems and needs in the Sevier River Basin.

- Enhancing winter outdoor recreation opportunities: access, facilities, programs

Table 15-2 FEDERAL PARKS, MONUMENTS AND RECREATION AREAS				
Name	Visitation (1000)	Type	Overnight Facilities	Elevation (feet)
Bryce Canyon N.P.	950	Scenic	Lodge, Camp	8,000
Cedar Breaks N.M.	220	Scenic	RV, Camping	10,000
Little Sahara R.A.	243	OHV	RV. Camping	5,000

- Need for Outdoor Recreation ethics--among OHVs, bikers, and littering campers and fishermen;
- Develop stable funding sources for acquiring lands and developing outdoor recreation and tourism facilities;
- Provide more water-based recreation opportunities: access to lakes, reservoirs, streams;
- Provide information facilities for travelers and tourists--get them off the freeways and into the area;
- Provide improved quality and accessible hunting and fishing opportunities: areas being closed off by private development and federal regulations;
- Provide recreation planning assistance to local government and businesses: grants, data base, programs;
- Complete reasonable development of existing parks: renovation where facilities are run down; provide at least a basic level for visitor services in local, state and federal park and recreation areas. (Utah SCORP, 1992, p. 93)

Recent reservoir user surveys have been conducted by the Division of Parks and Recreation during the years 1996-1997. Each reservoir park site has different characteristics, but there are some common findings and concerns by reservoir park users:

- Respondent parties expend between \$90 to \$230 per visit on food, lodging, gas, recreation equipment, and equipment rentals--usually in parties of two adults and more than two children.
- Location, facilities and affordability are primary attractions to park users.
- Major needs include maintenance of facilities (clean and green), trails, rentals (jet skis or boats), shade and water access--including beaches.
- Depending on the park, and its level of development--the provision and maintenance of beaches and rest rooms ranked very high.
- The most popular activities were camping,

boating, waterskiing. This depends upon the quality and character of the resource in question.

One other problem is the transfer of exotic species from one water body to another, either directly by fishermen or by water craft. There is the potential for introducing undesirable species.

The numbers of personal water craft are increasing. They are becoming a problem in many areas such as Yuba Lake on holiday weekends where there are large crowds. In shallow water areas, such as Gunnison Bend Reservoir, they disturb waterfowl. There is also a danger of hitting objects, such as fences, that are covered during high water.

15.6 NEEDED RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

A 1991 and 1995-statewide survey revealed public attitudes and desires regarding state parks and outdoor recreation in general:

- Needs for the counties in the drainage included developed camping opportunities; improved fishing (access, quality, habitat); improved hunting (access, quality of big game and upland game); golf courses (varied between counties); primitive camping (only basic, if any development); picnicking facilities; trails; OHV staging areas and trails; mountain bike trails; equestrian facilities (corral, hitching, loading, watering, staging areas); **backways** and byways (less developed roads for sightseeing, and paved roads with good signs, beautiful vistas and access to quality recreation areas).
- Respondents did not want state parks over-developed or privatized; basic services; don't sell for private development; charge more fees to secure development funds; tell users how funds are spent--let them see what they are paying for.
- Users want stable sources of funding for parks so future uses can be planned for and implemented.
- Park users are not averse to park closure once capacity is reached to assure quality

- experience and protection of a sustainable resource. (USU, 1995)

15.7 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two major issues. These are outdoor ethics and comprehensive planning.

157.1 Outdoor Ethics

Issue • Many conflicts are exacerbated by unethical behavior in recreational settings.

Discussion • As the use of flat-water facilities increase, boating and water skiing accidents are becoming more commonplace. There often appears to be no concern by boaters for each other's safety or for respecting others' recreation experience, particularly where water-skiing is involved.

Some areas are so popular, especially on holiday weekends, facilities are overcrowded to the point security personnel are required to maintain a semblance of order. This is especially true at Yuba Lake State Park. To complicate the problem, three ownerships are involved. There is private land, Division of State Parks and Recreation facilities and lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Waste disposal facilities are especially overloaded to the point it is dangerous to people's health and welfare.

Programs such as TREAD LIGHTLY, CAPTAIN SAFE'TE (boating safety), hunter education and off-highway vehicle training are helping make everyone aware of the problems. Education and enforcement programs need to be continued and even increased in the future.

In some situations, it would be desirable to provide areas for specific activities such as bird watching, fishing only or quiet areas.

Recommendation • The Division of Parks and Recreation should organize groups with a **CROSS**-section of recreators and managers to obtain ideas and support for recreational safety and to determine ways to reduce conflict.

157.2 Comprehensive Planning

Issue • Efficient allocation of resources can best be achieved through comprehensive planning.

Discussion • The Division of Parks and Recreation is in the process of preparing comprehensive management plans for all the areas it manages in the Sevier River Basin. The objective is to make all state parks more attractive and better able to meet the needs of the recreating public.

Recommendation • The Division of Parks and Recreation should continue to prepare and update management plans to achieve and balance the use of water resources for recreation.



Little Sahara sand dunes